



## Finding Their Voice, Formerly Homeless People “Speak Up,” Tell Policymakers Supportive Housing Works

For Immediate Release  
April 27, 2015

Contact: Robert Friant, CSH  
robert.friant@csh.org

**SACRAMENTO** – Dozens of advocates, including those once homeless in Los Angeles, took their stories directly to policymakers today at the State Capitol, sharing first-hand how supportive housing changed their lives and placed them on a path to greater self-sufficiency.

Organized by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) and supported by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, story sharing through “**Speak Up**” brings people who were formerly homeless, now residents of supportive housing, together with legislators and other decision-makers who impact policies and programs affecting people living in homelessness.

"No one is better positioned to describe the transformative effect of supportive housing than the people who have successfully moved off the streets of Los Angeles into stable housing," said Steven M. Hilton, Chairman, President & CEO of the **Conrad N. Hilton Foundation**. "The impact of hearing an individual's story of surviving homelessness and transitioning to housing is immeasurable. This is why we are proud to support CSH's Speak Up program, which gives formerly homeless people the tools and empowerment they need to share their experiences."

Supportive housing is a cost-effective solution to homelessness, seamlessly integrating affordable rental apartments for those in need of homes with access to a wide array of community-based services such as medical care, mental and behavioral health recovery, job training and programs to enhance life-skills.

“Due in great part to the generosity of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the goals of ending chronic and veteran homelessness are priorities in Los Angeles County,” said Deborah De Santis, President & CEO of CSH. “Those working in the field are well aware supportive housing works. The “Speak Up” effort takes the evidence-based results and statistics and puts faces on them, changing hearts and minds, especially in a society where homelessness has historically been viewed as unsolvable.”

With the generous backing of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, CSH launched Speak Up in 2013 as part of its Supportive Housing Community Advocates program, where formerly homeless residents of supportive housing learn to effectively represent themselves and their communities. The year-long curriculum combines monthly educational trainings on topics such as housing policy, advocacy, storytelling, narrative development, and public speaking with individual coaching sessions, as well as numerous opportunities to advocate at local, state, and federal levels.

“Everyone should have a place to stay and it shouldn’t be on the side of a freeway,” said Terrance, a supportive housing resident. “I slept by the side of a freeway a few years ago, during the rainy season. I can deal with life so much better now (in supportive housing). It’s independence I’ve never had before and I love it. I wake up every day and I feel good.”

In addition to building advocacy skills, participants in Speak Up are encouraged to examine their relationship to housing and articulate the challenges of overcoming homelessness. Stories of lived experiences are critical to reframe public perception and build the public and political will necessary to end homelessness. The stories touch on different struggles, but all illustrate the isolation of homelessness and the ultimate solution provided by supportive housing.

“Through the resident-advocate stories we not only learn what works in solving homelessness, we begin to understand what life after homelessness looks like and the tremendous potential of the men and women who have made this journey,” said De Santis. “The connections between the experiences, public policy and the broader social debate, allow the advocates to reinvigorate public dialogue. By understanding the human side of ending homelessness, we open the door to new allies and partners to share our common belief homelessness can be ended through supportive housing.”

###

## **ABOUT CSH**

For over 20 years, CSH has been the national champion for supportive housing, demonstrating its potential to improve the lives of very vulnerable individuals and families. CSH has earned an award-winning reputation as a highly effective, financially stable organization, with strong partnerships across government, community organizations, foundations, and financial institutions. CSH is advancing innovative solutions, using housing as a platform for services to improve lives, maximize public resources, and build healthy communities. CSH is working to assure housing solutions are accessible to more people in more places. [www.csh.org](http://www.csh.org)